

# American Society of Civil Engineers

The **American Society of Civil Engineers** (**ASCE**) is a tax-exempt professional body founded in 1852 to represent members of the civil engineering profession worldwide. Headquartered in Reston, Virginia, it is the oldest national engineering society in the United States.<sup>[4]</sup> Its constitution was based on the older Boston Society of Civil Engineers from 1848.<sup>[5]</sup>

ASCE is dedicated to the advancement of the science and profession of civil engineering and the enhancement of human welfare through the activities of society members.<sup>[1]</sup> It has about 152,000 members in about 177 countries.<sup>[2]</sup> Its mission is to provide essential value to members, their careers, partners, and the public; facilitate the advancement of technology; encourage and provide the tools for lifelong learning; promote professionalism and the profession; develop and support civil engineers.<sup>[1]</sup>

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## American Society of Civil Engineers



<b>Abbreviation</b>	ASCE
<b>Founded</b>	November 5, 1852
<b>Type</b>	Engineering society
<b>Focus</b>	Purpose of the group is the advancement of the science and profession of Civil engineering and the enhancement of human welfare through the activities of society members. <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Location</b>	Reston, Virginia, United States
<b>Area served</b>	Worldwide
<b>Method</b>	Industry standards, conferences, publications
<b>Members</b>	152,000 <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Official language</b>	English
<b>President</b>	Kristina L. Swallow
<b>Executive Director</b>	Thomas W. Smith III
<b>Revenue</b>	US\$56.9 million (2018) <sup>[3]</sup>
<b>Endowment</b>	US\$31.3 million (2016) <sup>[2]</sup>

LTPP International Data Analysis Contest Award

## ASCE Foundation

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### References

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<b>Employees</b>	308 (2015)
<b>Website</b>	asce.org ( <a href="http://asce.org">http://asce.org</a> )

## History

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The first serious and documented attempts to organize civil engineers as a professional society in the newly created United States were in the early 19th century.<sup>[6][7]</sup> In 1828, John Kilbourn of Ohio, managed a short-lived "Civil Engineering Journal", editorializing about the recent incorporation of the Institution of Civil Engineers in Great Britain that same year, Kilbourn suggested that the American corps of engineers could constitute an American society of civil engineers.<sup>[7][6]</sup> Later, in 1834, an American trade periodical, the "American Railroad Journal" advocated for similar national organization of civil engineers.<sup>[7]</sup>

### Institution of American Civil Engineers

On December 17, 1838, a petition started circulating asking civil engineers to meet in 1839 in Baltimore, Maryland to organize a permanent society of civil engineers.<sup>[7]</sup> Prior to that, thirteen notable civil engineers largely identifiable as being from New York, Pennsylvania, or Maryland met in Philadelphia. This group presented the Franklin Institute of Philadelphia with a formal proposal that an Institution of American Civil Engineers be established as an adjunct of the Franklin...<sup>[7]</sup> Some of them were:<sup>[7]</sup>

- Benjamin Wright. In 1969, the American Society of Civil Engineers declared Wright to be the 'Father of American Civil Engineering'.<sup>[8]</sup>
- William Strickland

- Pennsylvanians Edward Miller and Solomon. W. Roberts, the latter being Chief Engineer for the Allegheny Portage railroad, the first crossing of the Allegheny mountains (1831–1834)

Forty engineers actually appeared at the February 1839 meeting Baltimore including J. Edgar Thomson (Future Chief Engineer and later President of the Pennsylvania Railroad), Wright, Roberts, Edward Miller, and the Maryland engineers Isaac Trimble and architect Benjamin H. Latrobe and attendees from as far as Massachusetts, Illinois, and Louisiana.<sup>[7]</sup> Subsequently, a group met again in Philadelphia, led by its Secretary, Edward Miller to take steps to formalize the society, participants now included such other notable engineers as:<sup>[7]</sup>

- John B. Jervis
- Claudius Crozet
- William Gibbs McNeill
- George Washington Whistler
- Walter Gwynn
- J. Edgar Thompson
- Sylvester Welch, brother of future ASCE president Ashbel Welch
- Other members included Jonathan Knight and Moncure Robinson.

Miller drafted up a proposed constitution which gave the society's purpose as "the collection and diffusion of professional knowledge, the advancement of mechanical philosophy, and the elevation of the character and standing of the Civil Engineers of the United States."<sup>[7]</sup> Membership in the new society restricted membership to engineers and "architects and eminent machinists were to be admitted only as Associates."<sup>[9]</sup> The proposed constitution failed, and no further attempts were made to form another society.<sup>[7]</sup> Miller later ascribed the failure due to the difficulties of assembling members due available means for traveling in the country at time.<sup>[7]</sup> One of the other difficulties members would have to contend with was the requirement to produce each year, one previously unpublished paper or "...present a scientific book, map, plan or model, not already in the possession of the Society, under the penalty of \$10."<sup>[9]</sup> In that same period, the editor of the American Railroad Journal commented that effort had failed in part due to certain jealousies which arose due to the proposed affiliation with the Franklin Institute.<sup>[7]</sup> That journal continued discussion on forming an engineers' organization from 1839 thru 1843 serving its own self interests in advocating its journal as a replacement for a professional society but to no avail.

## **The American Society of Civil Engineers and Architects**

During the 1840s, professional organizations continued to develop and organize in the United States. The organizers motives were largely to "improve common standards, foster research, and disseminate knowledge through meetings and publications."<sup>[10]</sup> Unlike earlier associations such as the American Philosophical Society, these newer associations were not seeking to limit membership as much as pursue "more specialized interests."<sup>[10]</sup> Examples of this surge in new

professional organizations in America were the American Statistical Association (1839), American Ethnological Society (1842), American Medical Association (1847), American Association for the Advancement of Science, (1848) and National Education Association (1852).<sup>[10]</sup>

During this same period of association incorporations on the 1840s, attempts were again made at organizing an American engineer association. They succeeded at first with the Boston Society of Civil Engineers, organized in 1848 and then in October 1852, with an effort to organize a Society of Civil Engineers and Architects in New York.<sup>[7][9]</sup> Led by Alfred W. Craven, Chief Engineer of the Croton Aqueduct and future ASCE president, the meeting resolved to incorporate the society under the name "American Society of Civil Engineers And Architects".<sup>[9]</sup> Membership eligibility was restricted to "civil, geological, mining and mechanical Engineers, architects, and other persons who, by profession, are interested in the advancement of science."<sup>[9]</sup> James Laurie was elected the society's first president. The meetings only went through 1855 and with the advent of the American Civil War, the society suspended its activities.<sup>[9]</sup> The next meeting was more than twelve years later in 1867.<sup>[9]</sup> A number of the original founders such as James Laurie, J.W. Adams, C. W. Copeland and W. H. Talcott were at this meeting and were dedicated to the objective of resuscitating the Society. They also planned to put the society on a more permanent footing as well as electing fifty-four new members to the Society.<sup>[9]</sup> With success in that effort, the young engineering society passed a resolution noting that its preservation was mainly due to the persevering efforts of its first president, James Laurie.<sup>[9]</sup> The address of President James Pugh Kirkwood delivered at that meeting in 1867 was the first publication of the Society, appearing in Volume 1 of "Transactions", bearing date of 1872.<sup>[9]</sup>

## 19th century

At an early meeting of the Board of Direction in 1852, instructions were given for the incorporation of the "American Society of Civil Engineers and Architects" but this was the proper steps were never taken, and therefore this name never legally belonged to the Association. On March 4, 1868, by a vote of 17 to 4, the name was changed to "American Society of Civil Engineers", but it was not until April 17, 1877, that the lack of incorporation was discovered and the proper steps taken to remedy the defect.<sup>[9]</sup> The society was then chartered and incorporated in New York state.<sup>[11]</sup>

## 20th century

Nora Stanton Barney was among the first women in the United States to earn a civil engineering degree, graduating from Cornell University in 1905 with a degree in civil engineering. In the same year, she was accepted as a junior member of the organization and began work for the New York City Board of Water Supply.<sup>[12][13]</sup> She was the first female member of ASCE, where she was allowed to be a junior member, but was denied advancement to associate member in 1916 because of her gender. In 2015, she was posthumously advanced to ASCE Fellow status.<sup>[14]</sup>

In 1999, the ASCE elected the top-ten "civil engineering achievements that had the greatest positive impact on life in the 20th century" in "broad categories". Monuments of the Millennium were a "combination of technical engineering achievement, courage and inspiration, and a dramatic influence on the development of [their] communities".<sup>[15]</sup> The achievements and monuments that best exemplified them included:

- Airport design and development – the Kansai International Airport in Osaka, Japan
- Dams – the Hoover Dam on the Colorado River in the United States
- Interstate Highway System – "the system overall"<sup>[15]</sup>
- Long-span bridges – like the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, California
- Rail transportation – as exemplified by the Eurotunnel rail system connecting the UK and France
- Sanitary landfills and solid waste disposal – "sanitary waste disposal advances overall"<sup>[15]</sup>
- Skyscrapers – the Empire State Building in Midtown Manhattan, New York City
- Wastewater treatment – the Chicago wastewater system
- Water supply and distribution – the California State Water Project
- Water transportation – the Panama Canal



Nora Stanton Blatch Barney 1921



U.S. stamp commemorating the 100th anniversary of the ASCE in 1952

## Overview

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ASCE's mission is to deliver essential value to "its members, their careers, our partners, and the public" as well as enable "the advancement of technology, encourage and provide the tools for lifelong learning, promote professionalism and the profession."<sup>[16]</sup><sup>[17]</sup> The Society also seeks to "develop and support civil engineer leaders, and advocate infrastructure and environmental stewardship."<sup>[16]</sup> The Society as an exempt organization in the United States (Section 501(c)(3)) was required to reported its program service accomplishments and related expenses and revenues.<sup>[16]</sup>

## Publications

ASCE stated that dissemination of technical and professional information to the civil engineering profession was a major goal of the society.<sup>[16]</sup> This is accomplished through a variety of publications and information products, including 35 technical and professional

journals amongst them the ASCE Journal of Structural Engineering, the Journal of Environmental Engineering, the Journal of Hydraulic Engineering, Journal of Hydrologic Engineering, the Journal of Transportation Engineering, Part A: Systems, Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management, *Civil Engineering*, the Society's monthly magazine, an online bibliographic database, conference proceedings, standards, manuals of practice and technical reports.<sup>[16]</sup> The ASCE Library contains 470+ E-books and standards, some with chapter-level access and no restrictive DRM, and 600+ online proceedings.

## **Conferences, meetings, and education**

Each year, more than 55,000 engineers earn continuing education units (CEUs) and/or professional development hours (PDHs) by participating in ASCE's continuing education programs. ASCE hosts more than 15 annual and specialty conferences, over 200 continuing education seminars and more than 300 live web seminars.<sup>[16]</sup> Meetings include "...committees, task forces, focus groups, workshops and seminars designed to bring together civil engineering experts either from specific fields or those with a broad range of experience and skills. These meetings deal with specific topics and issues facing civil engineers such as America's failing infrastructure, sustainability, earthquakes, and bridge collapses."<sup>[16]</sup>

## **Engineering programs**

The engineering programs division directly advances the science of engineering by delivering technical content for ASCE's publications, conferences and continuing education programs. It consists of eight discipline specific institutes, four technical divisions and six technical councils. The work is accomplished by over 600 technical committees with editorial responsibility for 28 of ASCE's 33 journals. On an annual basis, the division conducts more than twelve congresses and specialty conferences.<sup>[16]</sup> As a founding society of ANSI and accredited standards development organization, ASCE committees use an established and audited process to produce consensus standards under a program supervised by the Society's Codes and Standards Committee.<sup>[18]</sup>

Civil Engineering Certification Inc. (CEC), affiliated with ASCE, has been established to support specialty certification academies for civil engineering specialties and is accredited by the Council of Engineering and Scientific Specialty Boards (CESB). CEC also handles safety certification for state, municipal, and federal buildings, formerly the province of the now-defunct Building Security Council. The Committee on Critical Infrastructure (CCI) provides vision and guidance on ASCE activities related to critical infrastructure resilience, including planning, design, construction, O&M, and event mitigation, response and recovery.

Certification is the recognition of attaining advanced knowledge and skills in a specialty area of civil engineering. ASCE offers certifications for engineers who demonstrate advanced knowledge and skills in their area of engineering.

- American Academy of Water Resources Engineers (AAWRE)
- Academy of Geo-Professionals (AGP)

- Academy of Coastal, Ocean, Port & Navigation Engineers (ACOPNE)

## Institutes

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ASCE also has nine full-service institutes created to serve working professionals working within specialized fields of civil engineering:<sup>[19]</sup>

- Architectural Engineering Institute (AEI)
- Coasts, Oceans, Ports and Rivers Institute (COPRI)
- Construction Institute (CI)
- Engineering Mechanics Institute (EMI)
- Environmental and Water Resources Institute (EWRI)
- Geo-Institute (G-I)
- Transportation and Development Institute (T&DI)
- Structural Engineering Institute (SEI)
- Utility Engineering & Surveying Institute (UESI)

## Advocacy

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To advance its policy mission, ASCE "...identifies legislation to improve the nation's infrastructure, and advance the profession of engineering specifically, ASCE lobbied on legislation at the Federal, State and local levels.<sup>[16]</sup> In 2015, ASCE's Lobbying at the Federal level was focused primarily upon:<sup>[16]</sup>

- Reauthorization of the federal surface transportation programs such as Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21)
- Reauthorization of the brownfields revitalization and environmental restoration act.
- Reauthorization of the national dam safety program and creation of a national levee safety program due to National Levee Safety Act Of 2007, WRDA Title IX, Section 9000.<sup>[20]</sup>
- Reauthorization of the Clean Water State Revolving Fund program
- Reauthorization of the drinking water state revolving fund program
- Water resources development act
- funding for stem education programs
- Reauthorization of the 1977 national earthquake hazards reduction program
- Reauthorization of the national windstorm impact reduction act
- Safe building code incentive act
- Appropriations for federal programs relating to civil engineering, including surface transportation, aviation, water resources, environment, education, homeland security, and research and development.

Lobbying at the state and local level focused primarily upon licensure of civil engineers, procurement of engineering services, continuing education, and the financing of infrastructure improvements as well as lobbying at the state level to raise the minimum requirements for licensure as a professional engineer as part of ASCE's Raise the Bar (RTB) and Civil Engineering Body of Knowledge (CEBoK) initiatives.<sup>[16]</sup>

For 2018, ASCE identified Federal advocacy priorities as follows:<sup>[21]</sup>

- Civil engineering education (higher education)
- Clean water, drinking water and wastewater issues
- Natural hazards mitigation & infrastructure security
- Qualifications-Based Selection for engineering services
- Research and Development Funding
- Science, technology, engineering and math(STEM) education & support (K-12)
- Sustainability, implicitly sustainable engineering
- Transportation infrastructure

The State advocacy priorities in 2018 are as follows:<sup>[21]</sup>

- Licensing
- Natural Hazards Impact Mitigation
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education & support (K-12)
- State support for civil engineering higher education
- Sustainability, implicitly sustainable engineering
- Tort reform & indemnification for pro bono services
- Transportation infrastructure financing

## **Strategic issues and initiatives**

To promote the Society's objectives and address key issues facing the civil engineering profession, ASCE developed three strategic initiatives: Sustainable Infrastructure, the ASCE Grand Challenge, and Raise the Bar.<sup>[22]</sup>

## **Policy statements**

ASCE developed policy statements on major technical, professional and educational issues of interest to the civil engineering community and the nation in the following areas:<sup>[23]</sup>

- Coastal zones, off shore and waterways
- Dams, flood control and levees



- Disaster mitigation and response
- Diversity
- Education, inclusive of statements on history and heritage of civil engineering, STEM and academic prerequisites for licensure and professional practice laying out ASCE's Raise the Bar and Civil Engineering Body of Knowledge initiatives.<sup>[24]</sup>
- Energy
- Engineering practice, inclusive of statements on civil engineering project team, engineering surveying, Aesthetics, Professional Ethics and Conflict of Interest, Combating Corruption
- Environmental issues, inclusive of statements on acid rain, physical and economic impacts of climate change, pollution management, wetlands regulatory policy, support for the Endangered Species, harmful algal blooms, greenhouse gases and electronic waste recycling.
- Government
- Hazardous and solid waste
- Infrastructure, inclusive of statements on
  - Sustainable growth and development that integrates "... appropriate urban scale and form, diversity of land use and good engineering design to achieve a balance between the interests of the individual, the community and the natural and built environments."<sup>[25][26]</sup>
  - Infrastructure investment with an effort to target the costs of installed infrastructure. ASCE argues that policy makers should seek to maximize the rate of economic return on infrastructure investment. ASCE advocates for these decision-makers to follow established project and program management principles funded from a wide range of options and types of infrastructure debt such as dedicated user-fees, bonds, Public-private partnership, private investment, infrastructure banks such as the proposed National Infrastructure Reinvestment Bank, state and federal loan funds such as the Highway Trust Fund or State Revolving Funds.<sup>[27]</sup> This effort had three sub-initiatives:
    - Leadership in Infrastructure Renewal, ASCE makes the argument that the United States needs a "compelling and overarching vision" for infrastructure investment.<sup>[27]</sup> This statement on infrastructure policy and related reports<sup>[28]</sup> laid the conceptual framework for the ASCE Report Card for America's Infrastructure, related "Failure to Act" reports<sup>[29]</sup> and State and Regional Infrastructure Report Cards<sup>[30]</sup> and guiding principle recommendations for planning and executing critical infrastructure in the United States.
    - Sustainability, Resiliency and Innovation, ASCE advocates that life-cycle cost analysis should be a part of every new or renewed infrastructure project with funding allocated to develop new and improved techniques in delivering projects, construction engineering and building materials for meeting society's infrastructure needs.<sup>[27]</sup> This statement on infrastructure policy and related reports<sup>[28]</sup> laid the conceptual framework for the ASCE Grand Challenge and related report on the recommended use of life-cycle cost analysis in transportation planning.<sup>[28]</sup>

- Plans to Sustain and Enhance Infrastructure, ASCE makes the argument that infrastructure investment should be prioritized by program managers and executed by project managers; according to well-conceived management plans that are consistent with the "...national vision and focus on system wide metrics."<sup>[27]</sup>
  - Regulatory process for infrastructure development, ASCE advocates for strategies that expedite regulatory processes and related decision-making for critical infrastructure projects to "proceed in a timely manner". Its recommendations in this area was for programs to require concurrent reviews by project stakeholders managing design codes (such as UBC and NEC) and other permitting such as wetlands dredge and fill for infrastructure projects. ASCE also recommended the creation of a "single administrative processing/permitting agency" for approving plans for constructing critical infrastructure as well as time-limits on permitting agency decision-making for approving infrastructure project plans.<sup>[31]</sup>
- International
- Legal reform
- Licensure
- Procurement/contract issues
- Public involvement
- Quality/standards
- Research
- Space
- Tax issues
- Transportation issues
- Wastewater
- Water resources management

## Awards and designations

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ASCE honors civil engineers through many Society Awards including the Norman medal (1874), Wellington prize (1921), Huber Civil Engineering Research Prize, the Outstanding Projects and Leaders (OPAL) awards in the categories of construction, design, education, government and management,<sup>[32]</sup> the Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement (OCEA) for projects, the Henry L. Michel Award for Industry Advancement of Research and the Charles Pankow Award for innovation, 12 scholarships and fellowships for student members. Created in 1968 by ASCE's Sanitary Engineering Division, the Wesley W. Horner award is named after former ASCE President Wesley W. Horner, and given to a recently peer



ASCE Historical Marker at Philadelphia City Hall.

reviewed published paper in the fields of hydrology, urban drainage, or sewerage. Special consideration is given to private practice engineering work that is recognized as a valuable contribution to the field of environmental engineering.<sup>[33]</sup> The Lifetime Achievement Award has been presented annually since 1999 and recognizes five different individual leaders. One award is present in each category of design, construction, government, education, and management.<sup>[34]</sup>

## **Walter L. Huber Civil Engineering Research Prize**

In July 1946, the Board of Direction authorized annual awards on recommendation by the Society's Committee on Research to stimulate research in civil engineering. In October 1964, Mrs. Alberta Reed Huber endowed these prizes in honor of her husband, Walter L. Huber, Past President, ASCE.<sup>[35]</sup> The Huber Prize is considered the highest level mid-career research prize in civil engineering and is awarded for outstanding achievements and contributions in research with respect to all disciplines of civil engineering.

## **LTPP International Data Analysis Contest Award**

The LTPP International Data Analysis Contest is an annual data analysis contest held by the ASCE in collaboration with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The participants are supposed to use the LTPP data.<sup>[36]</sup>

## **ASCE Foundation**

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The **ASCE Foundation** is a charitable foundation established in 1994 to support and promote civil engineering programs that "... enhance quality of life, promote the profession, advance technical practices, and prepare civil engineers for tomorrow." It is incorporated separately from the ASCE, although it has a close relationship to it and all the Foundation's personnel are employees of ASCE.<sup>[16]</sup> The Foundation Board of Directors has seven persons and its bylaws require that four of the seven directors must be ASCE officers as well and the ASCE executive director and Chief financial officer must also be ASCE employees.<sup>[16]</sup> The Foundation's support is most often to ASCE's charitable, educational and scientific programs.<sup>[16]</sup> The Foundation's largest program is supporting three strategic areas; lifelong learning and leadership, advocacy for infrastructure investment and the role of civil engineers in sustainable practices.<sup>[16]</sup> In 2014, this foundation's support in these areas was almost US\$4 million.<sup>[16]</sup>

## **Criticisms and historical controversies**

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### **Controversies in New Orleans levee investigations**

**Press release of expert review panel 2007**

ASCE provides peer reviews at the request of public agencies and projects as a "means to improve the management and quality of [public agency] services and thus better protect the public health and safety with which they are entrusted".<sup>[37][38]</sup> After the 2005 levee failures in Greater New Orleans, the commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Lt Gen Carl Strock P.E., M.ASCE) requested that ASCE create an expert review panel to peer review the Corps-sponsored Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force, the body commissioned by the Corps to assess the performance of the hurricane protection system in metro New Orleans. Lawrence Roth, Deputy Executive Director of the ASCE led the ERP development, served as the panel's chief of staff and facilitated its interaction with IPET.<sup>[39]</sup> The expert panel's role was to provide an independent technical review of the IPET's activities and findings, as stated at a National Research Council meeting in New Orleans: "an independent review panel ensure[s] that the outcome is a robust, credible and defensible performance evaluation".<sup>[40]</sup> On February 12, 2007, Lt. Gen Strock gave all expert review panel members an Outstanding Civilian Service Medals.<sup>[39]</sup>

On June 1, 2007, the ASCE issued its expert review panel report,<sup>[41]</sup> and an accompanying press release.<sup>[42]</sup> The press release was considered controversial because it contained information not present in the report, conflicting with the report, and minimized the Army Corps' involvement in the catastrophe: "Even without breaching, Hurricane Katrina's rainfall and surge overtopping would have caused extensive and severe flooding—and the worst loss of life and property loss ever experienced in New Orleans." The report stated that had levees and pump stations not failed, "far less property loss would have occurred and nearly two-thirds of deaths could have been avoided."<sup>[41]</sup> :39 The ASCE administration was criticized by the *Times-Picayune* for an attempt to minimize and understate the role of the Army Corps in the flooding.<sup>[43]</sup>

## **Ethics complaint**

In October 2007, Raymond Seed, a University of California-Berkeley civil engineering professor and ASCE member submitted a 42-page ethics complaint to the ASCE alleging that the Corps of Engineers with ASCE's help sought to minimize the Corps' mistakes in the flooding, intimidate anyone who tried to intervene, and delay the final results until the public's attention had turned elsewhere.<sup>[44]</sup> The Corps acknowledged receiving a copy of the letter and refused to comment until the ASCE's Committee on Professional Conduct (CPC) had commented on the complaint.<sup>[45]</sup> It took over a year for the ASCE to announce the results of the CPC.<sup>[46]</sup> The ASCE self-study panel did not file charges of ethical misconduct and blamed errors on "staff" and not review panel members having created the June press release."<sup>[47]</sup>

## **Review panels to examine alleged ethics breaches**

On November 14, 2007, ASCE announced that U.S. Congressman Sherwood Boehlert, R-N.Y. (ret), would lead an independent task force of outside experts to review how ASCE participated in engineering studies of national significance.<sup>[48]</sup> ASCE President David Mongan said the review was to address criticism of ASCE's role in assisting the Army Corps of Engineers-

sponsored investigation of Katrina failures. Mongan assured citizens of metro New Orleans in a letter to the *Times Picayune*, that ASCE took "this matter very seriously and that appropriate actions are being taken".<sup>[49]</sup>

The panel recommended in results released on September 12, 2008, that ASCE should immediately take steps to remove the potential for conflict of interest in its participation in post-disaster engineering studies.<sup>[50]</sup> The most important recommendations were that peer review funds over \$1 million should come from a separate source, like the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), that ASCE should facilitate but not control the assessment teams, and that information to the public and press should be disseminated not under the extremely tight controls that Ray Seed and his team experienced. It concluded that ASCE should draw up an ethics policy to eliminate questions of possible conflicts of interest.<sup>[50]</sup>

On April 6, 2009, an internal probe with the ASCE issued a report that ordered a retraction of the ASCE's June 1, 2007, press release.<sup>[47]</sup> The panel determined that the press release had "inadvertently conveyed a misleading impression regarding the role of engineering failures in the devastation of New Orleans", that it incorrectly said that surge levels along Mississippi's coastline were higher than water levels caused by a tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004, and that it had incorrectly repeated estimates of deaths and property damage in New Orleans that might have occurred if levees and floodwalls had not been breached.

### **Grassroots group spoof of ASCE - USACE relationship**

On November 5, 2007, New Orleans-based grassroots group *Levees.org* led by Sandy Rosenthal criticized the ASCE's close relationship with the United States Army Corps of Engineers in a spoof online public service announcement.<sup>[51]</sup> On November 12, 2007, the ASCE asked *Levees.org* to remove the video from the internet, threatening the organization with legal action if it did not comply.<sup>[52]</sup> On November 13, the *Times-Picayune* posted the video on its website.<sup>[53]</sup> Flanked by lawyers with Adams and Reese in the presence of extensive media coverage, the group ignored the threat and posted the video to YouTube citing Louisiana's Anti-SLAPP statute, a "strategic lawsuit against public participation", which allows courts to weed out lawsuits designed to chill public participation on matters of public significance.<sup>[54]</sup> In a response for comment, ASCE President Mongan replied, "Since the video has already been widely reposted by other organizations, moving forward, we feel our time and expertise are best utilized working to help protect the residents of New Orleans from future storms and flooding."<sup>[54]</sup>

### **USACE grant money for disinformation, 2008**

In March 2008, *Levees.org* announced that records obtained under the Freedom of Information Act revealed that as early October 2005, the Army Corps of Engineers had directed and later paid the ASCE more than \$1.1 million for its peer review (Grant Number: W912HZ-06-1-0001). The grant also paid for a series of misleading ASCE presentations attempting to shift blame away from the corps and onto local levee officials.<sup>[55]</sup> Members of the ASCE are forbidden from making false or exaggerated statements and also from making statements for an interested party unless this is disclosed. *Levees.org* claimed the records

showed how the external peer review would be done in four phases: Phase 1 was research and analysis on the performance of the levees, floodwalls and other important structures. Phase 2 was provision of information on the current system to prevent future flooding. Phase 3 was provision of information to evaluate alternative approaches to flood protection. Phase 4 was transfer information and knowledge gained to a broader audience within Corps and its consultancy community to communicate lessons learned. The group claimed that these records<sup>[56]</sup> were proof that ASCE's routine powerpoint presentation from 2007 and 2008 were a public relations campaign to repair the corps' reputation.<sup>[57]</sup> ASCE officials responded that ASCE paid for the powerpoint presentations itself and had not used USACE grant money for that purpose.

## See also





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- [ASCE Library](#)
- [ASCE-ASME Journal of Risk and Uncertainty in Engineering Systems](#)
- [Norman Medal](#)

## References

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1.  This article incorporates text from this source, which is in the *public domain*. "IRS Form 990 for American Society Of Civil Engineers Group (510202274) for 09/2008 from CitizenAudit.org" ([http://pdfs.citizenaudit.org/2014\\_03\\_EO/51-0202274\\_990\\_200809.pdf](http://pdfs.citizenaudit.org/2014_03_EO/51-0202274_990_200809.pdf)) (PDF). *Citizen Audit*. Retrieved November 7, 2017.
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  - ["Centennial of Engineering" \(http://usstampgallery.com/view.php?id=899a19b6bec5cddc50179f183ba138b628cf94b3\)](http://usstampgallery.com/view.php?id=899a19b6bec5cddc50179f183ba138b628cf94b3) – A 3¢ commemorative US postage stamp issued in 1952
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